

CREATIVE LOAFING

Kris Kristofferson

This Old Road

BY JAMES KELLY

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Kris Kristofferson has done more in his varied career than what you would expect to accomplish in three lifetimes. His newest release is a starkly recorded collection of original songs with a focus on mortality, reality and the current state of the world. Sounding craggier than ever, Kristofferson's voice may be an acquired taste, but he still packs a lyrical wallop. Pondering the nature of humanity on "In The News," he reflects on the absurdity of the pain people inflict on others. In the title track, he seems to be looking at his own life cycle but may also be thinking about his departed friends who traveled a similar path. The bare-bones production by Don Was (who also plays bass and piano) is enchanting, and longtime sidekick Stephen Bruton's subtle guitar work is a perfect touch, along with Jim Keltner's gentle percussion. From a renegade Rhodes scholar to an elder statesman in contemporary songwriting circles, Kristofferson still has the gift.

4 stars